

## WHAT MOVED THEM TO WRITE

### AUTHORS TELL THE STORIES OF THEIR FIRST EFFORTS.

**One Woman Did It to Rival Washington Irving. While Another Was Inspired by State Pride. Reforming First Purpose of a Third. Money, Says a Man.**

At luncheon in a Woman's Club the other day several writers found themselves at the same table. The subject of beginnings came up, and the only man in the party asked his nearest neighbor:

"What made you begin to write stories? I mean your very first?"

"To get ahead of Washington Irving," the neighbor replied laughing. "You see, my father had ideas of his own about training his children," she went on. "His method of teaching us good English was to make a copy of it. Sometimes it was an editorial article from *The Sun*, then it was a chapter from the Bible, and this time with me it chance to be a story from 'The Alhambra'." I was not pleased with my first copy, so voluntarily I made a second. This was so much to my liking that instead of putting By Washington Irving at the end I inscribed my own name.

"On submitting it to my father I proudly called his attention to the change, feeling almost sure that he would think my copy even better than the one by Mr. Irving. Of course he was amused, though as I now recall it he kept a grave face while he explained the situation. He made it clear to me that it made no difference how many copies I should make or how perfect it might be it would still be Irving's story. Then he went on to give me a still greater shock by assuring me that if I were to do such a thing later on, when I grew up, people would accuse me of stealing. Of course after being made to realize that the only way for me not to be outdone was to write a story out of my own brain, as my father had put it."

"A few days later I handed my father my first story. I had not then passed my seventh birthday. As I recall my father was a kindly critic, and under his guidance I not only wrote other stories but attempted to illustrate them. One of these was a blood curdling tale about a beautiful young woman who, after going through many trials, was finally killed in her own home by the villain. For it I made several pictures of the house, the back of the house, the side of the house and one corner of the front piazza. When my father was called on to play critic he asked, 'But, daughter, where is the young lady? Where is the villain?'

"Why?" was my astonished exclamation at finding any one so ignorant, they are in the house; he is killing her!"

"And I want to say that this was my very last attempt at illustrating my own stories."

"It was State pride that first impelled me to take up my pen," declared the next writer. "You know my home was in the South, and in the summer we used to go up to the plantation. When I was about 12 years old a post office was established on our place. As a consequence there were a number of sample copies of various sorts throwing around. Among those that attracted my attention was a rural weekly published in the northern part of New York State. In perusing this paper I discovered that almost every State in the country was represented by a farm letter excepting my own. This went on for weeks. When I could stand it no longer I took the responsibility on my own shoulders and proceeded to write that letter."

"I had read the letters from the other States with sufficient interest to know about what the editors wanted. I am not sure that I had ever heard of such a person as an editor. But, at any rate before writing that first letter I proceeded to inform myself by way of the overseer. Poor old man! I know now that he must have been sorely puzzled and doubtless his patience was sadly tried by my sudden thirst for knowledge about what was taking place in his department. When at last I had accumulated what I wanted I took myself to a little log cabin located in one corner of the yard. This was known as 'the office' and was a remnant of slave days when the overseers were supposed to keep books."

"In this little house I had discovered several huge ledgers with many unprinted pages. I proceeded to cut out some of these clean pages. As I look back on it now it seems about the most impossible paper for literary purposes. Fortunately I didn't know that. I only knew that for publication one must write on only one side of the paper. Oh, no! I didn't actually do the writing in the office. You see I also had brothers and sisters of whose laughter I stood in deadly fear. Having gathered my material I snuggled it up into the garret, and there in the back of an old atlas wrote what proved to be my first published article."

"My recollection is that it was four pages in length written on every other line and in what I believed to be a fair round hand. In the letter which I sent along with this manuscript I made it quite plain that the price was \$10. It seemed incredible to me now after numerous trials that within ten days after that first attempt left my hands I not only received the \$10 demanded but a request from the editor that I contribute weekly. That was a most serious moment. I can assure you. In the first place the editor's letter had been addressed to a military person of my name. And while I knew the letter was intended for me I knew that I would be sailing under false pretenses if I accepted the offer."

"I wrote that editor that I could not give him a weekly letter because I was too busy. This was really only half my reason. The first half was that I could not send a letter to my masculine relative and get a reply before the time to send off my second letter. I had agreed to write every week. Having disposed of that editor I proceeded to dictate another to the relative. I gravely asked him what would be the right thing for me to do, provided a letter came to our office directed to him, but when I knew what was intended for me. As gravely as I replied that it would be entirely right for me to open and keep the letter."

"Having settled that point I proceeded to write my second farm letter and to tick away the \$10 paid for the first. It was my \$10 now without any possibility of a doubt, and I wanted another. With the fourth \$10 that editor wrote that he was in the habit of paying regular contributions for three months instead of for each contribution. And I knew that we would have left the publication before the end of three months. I wrote him that I was willing to wait two months. I also said that it must be sent by regular letter. You see, the mail was intended to suffice by the overseer and his sister, both of whom depended on me to do the reading and writing. Thus made it very easy for me to send and receive letters without being discovered by others members of the family."

**AUTHORS AND THEIR WORK.**

Robert W. Chambers recently denied that experience was necessary to a novelist in depicting truthfully the things that he described to describe a drunkard does not necessitate being one.

"The moment a man thinks he has a mission, he's lost," says Mr. Chambers. "That's the trouble with a lot of the men who are trying to be great to-day. What we really need is the realization that that one of us is an individual."

The women are beating on our own ground these days. There's Mrs. Wharton. I don't know her equal among the novelists. And Mrs. Margaret Deland does more perfect work than any of us. There's Emerson Hough and Harold MacGrath agrees that fishing is the noblest sport of all.

Robert Alexander Mason, the humorist, author of "The Steering Wheel" and "Happy Hunting," ran for Congress in his Indiana district on the Socialist ticket.

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John Elliott and from photographs, and with many additional illustrations from rare photographs. \$2.50 net, postpaid \$2.22.

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LITTLE, BROWN & CO., Publishers, Boston



## French Books

Brentano's 5th Ave. & 27th St. New York

BOOKS. All out-of-print books supplied, to put out attractive books not under \$2.00 the matter, but also in illustrations, binding and cover. His rivals for the opposite, having been here, have been busy all day. A sudden inspiration sent the novelist past here, and one of the one little country newspaper that turned the editor was a friend; he put at the disposal of the author a page of printed proofs, facts, details; a glorious array.

As high glee Mr. Isham jannied the proofs in his pocket, called a carriage and drove about the business district. Half an hour so devoted gave him the atmosphere of the occasion, and borrowing a pair of shears and a paste pot from the friendly editor, he hastened to the railroad station.

On the mother's side Miss Donworth is a cousin of the celebrated Margaret Fuller and comes from the same stock, also as Mrs. Grover Cleveland. With mixed Irish and English blood from her father and Puritan ancestry from her mother Miss Donworth has inherited wit and the quality of repartee together with pride of stock and the traits that will support it.

### MORE HOLIDAY BOOKS.

#### The Output of the Season Also Unusually Decorative.

Christmas books are more, in number and the average price is higher than in years, say booksellers and the publishers' figures bear out the statement. Ten thousand books were published last year and 14,000 this year, so there are 4,000 more new books on the market this season than last to tempt the holiday purchaser.

It is said that the increase in the cost of paper has had something to do with raising the price of books. Then again better illustrations are demanded by the reading public than ever before. Speaking of the situation the buyer in one of the department stores said:

"With the exception of the children's books, publishers' price at \$1.00, this year the price is \$1.50 net. The same rate of increase holds good all along the line. The increase of price does not affect the trade at all, for there is such an immense variety to choose from that it is quite possible to select books that are within the limitations of one's purse."

Because the humor was so good one of her letters was sent to Mark Twain, and in his speech before the American Publishers Association he highly commended simplified spelling he used this letter as evidence of the ease with which an earnest soul might find expression without strictly adhering to orthodoxy or etymology. The letter was also published and used as a lead by the Simplified Spelling Society of New York and published in the newspapers reporting the dinner at which it was read by Mark Twain.

Miss Donworth was born at Machias,

Me. and was one of a large and highly gifted family, the children of highly educated parents. Her four brothers are bachelors and are known as excellent after-dinner speakers. Many of the wittinesses have found their way into "Jennie Allen" reports.

On the mother's side Miss Donworth is a cousin of the celebrated Margaret Fuller and comes from the same stock, also as Mrs. Grover Cleveland. With mixed Irish and English blood from her father and Puritan ancestry from her mother Miss Donworth has inherited wit and the quality of repartee together with pride of stock and the traits that will support it.

Books of travel are in great favor, one reason for this being that the cut and colored descriptions have been replaced by books written in a more pictorial vein, and from a slightly different point of view, than any we have had before.

Speaking of the situation the buyer in one of the department stores said:

"For a time it was rather difficult to get good children's books, but that is no longer the case. Now the great lots of good books for children, the ones charmingly illustrated, books that many of them would interest the old as well as the young."

"There are no 'best sellers,'" I make the statement in answer to many queries put to me not only by customers but by publishers and booksellers. These are as popular as ever, but there are an equally popular field on the ceiling and walls, and as many more that run a close second. Ordinarily these have been filled with great popularity and its sale will run far beyond that of any other book. For a time it was rather difficult to get good children's books, but that is no longer the case. Now the great lots of good books for children, the ones charmingly illustrated, books that many of them would interest the old as well as the young."

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